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ОПТИМИЗАЦИЯ ЯЗЫКОВОГО КУРСА ПОДГОТОВКИ К УЧАСТИЮ В МЕЖДУНАРОДНЫХ НАУЧНЫХ КОНФЕРЕНЦИЯХ

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EFFICIENCY OF THE LANGUAGE TRAINING COURSE FOR PRESENTING AT INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCES

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АННОТАЦИЯ

Целью статьи является рассмотрение путей оптимизации процесса языковой подготовки аспирантов к выступлениям с научными презентациями и докладами на международных конференциях. Приводится попытка проанализировать существующие подходы к языковому обучению для указанных целей и адресата. Автор предлагает структурно-тематическое наполнение курса, отвечающее цели, задачам и выделенному на курс лимиту академических часов. На основе проведенного анализа существующих международных стандартов и требований к оформлению научной презентации дается план организации научной презентации / доклада.

Ключевые слова: *научная презентация; компетентностный подход; аспирантура; обучение иноязычному общению; английский язык для академических целей, структура научной презентации.*

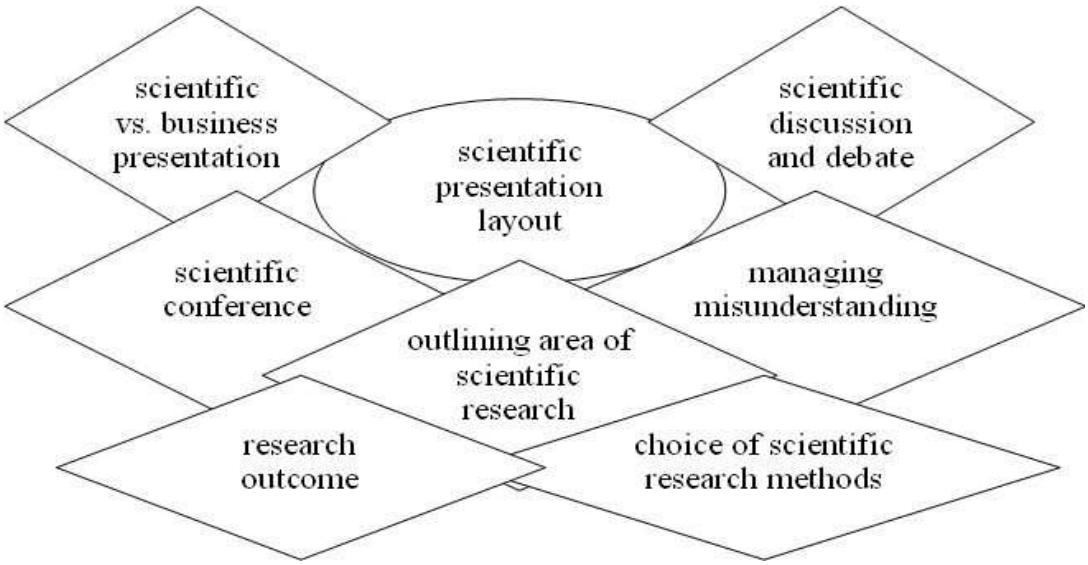
ABSTRACT

The article considers methods and techniques aimed at developing language skills and competences necessary to successfully deliver scientific presentations at international conferences. The author reasons the importance of the course, provides analysis of approaches that could contribute to the effective organization of the course. Special attention is paid to the course topics and material selection, course layout and structuring. The focus is also placed on the structure, features and content of academic scientific presentations for international conferences. Having analysed research work of foreign and Russian scientists on the problem, the author presents a sample of scientific presentation layout, which conforms to international academic standards.

Keywords: scientific presentation; competence based approach; post-graduate (PhD) course; language teaching; English for academic purposes, structure of scientific presentations.

University language training programmes aimed at preparing post-graduate students to participate at international conferences with scientific presentations are gaining popularity. Such courses are primarily communicative, and focus on improving language skills and main competences necessary to be able to take part in scientific debate and introduce results of scientific research work.

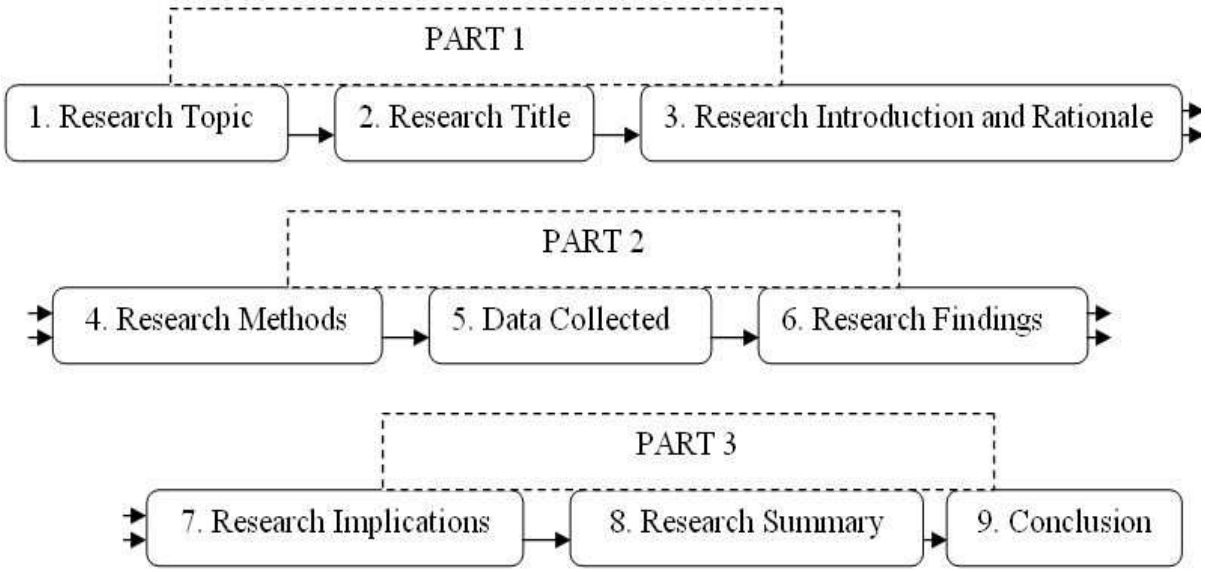
University departments offering such language programmes to students face a number of challenges in terms of the course curriculum, content relevance, time frame, level of language command of the students. Despite high demand of such language training, number of academic hours allocated to the course programme does not seem to fully satisfy the needs of the course agenda. Therefore, designing the course we have to limit that to certain content topic areas (Pic.1).



Picture 1. Course content topics.

Given that post-graduate students already have language command equal B1 (CEF), the course aims at developing and improving the set of language skills necessary to perform successfully at international level in the chosen scientific field [3].

It appears more efficient to concentrate on the structure, layout, and content elements of a scientific presentation as well as outline its differences from business (or commercial) presentations. Having analysed foreign and Russian articles on international standards to structure and layout of scientific presentations [2, 4, 5], we suggest introducing the following sample to students within the course (Pic.2). The structure and layout of a scientific presentation for international conferences corresponds to the suggested course structure.



Picture 2. Language training for scientific presentations – course structure.

Within 28 academic hours allocated to the course it seems reasonable to incorporate the part introducing theory into practical modules divided into three main parts (as shown in Pic.2 above). Each part deals with a particular set of three topic areas with their further practical use with the help of corresponding relevant tasks and assignments:

- using the list of key features characterising business and academic presentations, select from the presentation samples those which represent scientific presentation;
- watch two videos of presentation examples and say which one is an academic presentation; explain your choice using information from the theory part of the course;
- read the list of scientific research methods and select those which you would use in your scientific research project, justify your choice;
- watch a part of a scientific presentation, make a list of scientific research methods used by the presenter in his project work, give your attitude to the choice of methods;
- read scientific presentation samples and make a list of language structures used for linking, justifying, agreeing / disagreeing;
- read scientific presentation samples and make a list of language structures used for describing graphs and charts;
- watch a part of an academic presentation at a conference, analyse presenter's body language and behaviour, presentation layout, use of language structures.

It is also important to ensure that the tasks offered to students within the course contribute to developing their skills of critical thinking [1].

Practical aims of the course presuppose developing skills as part of communicative competence allowing the students to show capability of:

a) reading authentic scientific research work, process information, present the findings in a presentation or report;

b) participating in scientific discussions and debate with international colleagues;

c) presenting the findings of their own scientific research projects at international conferences;

d) analysing scientific information, describing charts and graphs, selecting appropriate research methods, stating research rationale and findings.

Assessment at the end of the course is designed to check the level of development of the following competences (Table 1).

Table 1.

Language training for scientific presentations – skills and competences

Part 1		
Presenting future scientific research area, topic, title, novelty	Explaining and justifying the choice of research area, title, novelty	Explaining and justifying the choice of research methods
Part 2		
Presenting and justifying expected practical implications of the scientific research project	Preparing a summary of the scientific research project to be presented at a scientific conference	Outlining the research procedure, using appropriate language structures; presenting graphs and charts
Part 3		
Participating in scientific discussions and debate with international colleagues	Presenting the topic, introduction, rationale, methods, data collected, findings, implications and a summary of the scientific research work at an international conference	

Assessment procedure covers three main areas – (1) present the topic and title of their scientific research project, justify and explain the choice of scientific field; (2) deliver part of a presentation covering the introduction, aim, rationale, novelty of scientific research work; (3) deliver part of a presentation covering selected research methods, data collected, findings, implications of the scientific research work.

The course final assessment is designed to check if students gained the skills enabling them to prepare a scientific presentation conforming to international standards concerning its structure and layout (see Pic.2 above).

As to final assessment criteria, at the end of the language course preparing for presenting at international scientific conferences the main subject for assessment is the full length academic presentation covering the results of scientific research work. The key assessment criterion is conformity to international standards for academic and scientific presentations. Apart from that, students are expected to meet the following criteria:

a) presentation shows the aim, topic, title, methods, rationale, data collected, findings, and implications of the scientific research project within the chosen field;

b) presenters do not exceed the time limit of 15-20 minutes covering the main information about their research work following the layout and sequence of points in conformance to international requirements (see Pic.2 above);

c) presenters are ready to use appropriate language structures to explain and justify the choice of subject, methods, and expected practical benefit of the research findings;

d) presenters use body language and eye contact to attract attention of the audience, questions at the end of the presentation are managed adequately;

e) visuals at each part of the presentation correspond relevantly to the presenter's speech, charts and graphs are described using appropriate language structures.

To summarize, efficiency of the language training within the course to prepare for scientific presentations at international conferences depends primarily on the careful choice of topic areas to be covered, thought-out and planned course structure, selection of relevant material, designing adequate tasks and assignments aimed at developing the necessary skills and competences. Students, who successfully complete the course, show capability to participate in scientific discussions and debate, present results of their scientific research work at international conferences, communicate adequately with colleagues from different countries on the topics covering scientific and professional issues.

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